

sica news

School Improvement Council Assistance

Spring 2001

A Day of Inspiration, Information, Challenge and Pride - **15th Annual SIC Conference Best Ever!**

Nearly 400 School Improvement Council members from across the state gathered at the Sheraton Hotel and Convention Center in Columbia for the 15th Annual SIC Conference, titled "From the Back Porch to the Boardroom: Finding Resources for Your School". Conference goers agreed it was a day of inspiration, information, challenge and pride.

Storyteller Lorraine Johnson-Coleman, author of Just Plain Folks and host of the National Public Radio program of the same name, made the audience laugh so hard they cried. She used lively stories to illustrate points about community development in her keynote address "Better Days & Worser Times – Learning Lessons from School Days of Our Past". Lorraine asked participants to "draw on their own strengths and find the strengths in their communities" to create the resources needed for their efforts. She inspired SIC members to take a fresh look at their neighbors to see the gifts they bring to the table.



Lorraine Johnson-Coleman signs a copy of her book, Just Plain Folks

Dr. Les Sternberg, Dean of the College of Education at the University of South Carolina, told Council members he was delighted to meet them in person and to learn more about Councils. New to USC and South Carolina, Dr. Sternberg noted that he is impressed with the education improvement efforts of Councils on the community level, and is excited about the

opportunity for greater collaboration between Councils and higher education in the future.

SIC members had the opportunity to attend two workshop sessions from a field of sixteen choices. Sessions covered a wide variety of topics including effective SIC's sharing their how-to's, a legislative update featuring two state legislators, technology centers, grant writing, and more. Exhibitors were also a part of the conference for the first time, sharing information with participants before the conference and during breaks.

Lunchtime brought a heartwarming address from South Carolina's Teacher of the Year, Christa Compton. Christa, an English teacher from Richland District #2, performed a monologue she wrote, titled "Every Day," about her first year of teaching. The audience listened intently, laughed loudly, and by the time the talented teacher finished, many were in tears. Christa has been named one of four finalists for National Teacher of the Year.

Dominic Cappello, co-creator of the "Can We Talk?" (CWT?) parent-child communication workshop, wrapped up the day's agenda by encouraging SIC members to address the challenges of their families and their communities with character and creativity. He shared ideas and activities found in the CWT? program and in his book, Ten Talks Parents Must Have with Their Children About Sex and Character that help parents find new ways to talk with their children, their neighbors, and even the stranger sitting next to them.

Dr. Jean Norman, Director of School Improvement Council Assistance closed the conference by thanking Council members for their hard work. She expressed her hope that the information and inspiration they received from the conference will help them do the work that lies ahead.

Governor Proclaims School Improvement Council Month

When School Improvement Council members arrived for the 15th Annual SIC Conference a remote satellite truck from WIS-TV greeted them at the door and a special surprise was waiting for them inside. Governor Jim Hodges opened the day by proclaiming the month of February as School Improvement Council Month.



Governor Hodges made a special effort to make time in his busy schedule to join in the festivities. The crowd gave the Governor a standing ovation as he moved to the stage to read the proclamation. He then spoke of his support for School Improvement Councils all over the state and thanked them for their hard work to improve education for all South Carolina's children. Governor Hodges' appearance marked the first time any governor has participated in the SIC Conference. His remarks and other portions of the general session were carried live in the Midlands area by WIS-TV.

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South Carolina: Tops in Testing

Public school students in South Carolina are tested annually at least once by the state and/or by the district. Many students are tested two or more times for a variety of reasons ranging from diagnostic to placement to accountability to college credits. Some tests are administered as a sample of students in a grade while others are given to every child.

Adding to the mixture of tests already given in the state, new tests are being "field tested" by the State Department of Education (SDE). For example, the science **PACT** will be given this year, then the test will be reviewed and revised in preparation for the official version being given in 2002. Some students in grades 4 and 8 will be tested in math and science as part of the **National Assessment of Education Progress** (NAEP) that will compare a national sample of students to see how they stack up to students in other countries.

In preparation for the PACT, districts and schools may use **Benchmark Tests**. Available for grades 3 – 8, these tests are compilations of items in Math and English/Language Arts that can be used to get an idea about how students will test against the standards. They are optional, not part of the state testing system, mostly multiple choice, and are scored locally. Teachers can use them to diagnose areas for additional student effort or re-teaching. Final versions will be available in Fall 2001.

On the drawing board are several more tests. Fall 2001 will be the last time the CSAB will be given to first grade students. Currently teachers are being trained how to give the new **SC Readiness Assessment** (SCRA) which is in the process of being piloted this school year for K-1. Development of the **End-of-Course Exams** is being considered by the State Board of Education (SBE) for these gateway courses: Algebra I, U.S. History, English I, and Biology. Accounting for 20% of the student's grade, the implications for communicating expectations to all teachers, students, and district personnel, scoring options, and quick turn-around time require thoughtful decision-making by the SBE. These tests will be used as indicators for effectiveness per the EAA, but duplicate the Exit Exam subjects giving rise to questions about too much testing – again.

Tests are also being developed that provide accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities, for alternative assessments, and for off-grade level administration of the PACT. South Carolina is in the process of developing a new state testing system that means we will be testing students with the "old" tests while asking them to take the new tests as samples, field tests, pilots, and revisions. Some of the tests are for diagnostic purposes (how is the student doing), but much of the testing required in the state is in response to the quest for accountability.

Access the SDE web site (www.sde.state.sc.us) for information about the testing program, the schedules, and samples of test items matching the standards.

(see box at right)

SIC and Principal to Write School Report Card Narrative

Each school must include a narrative on the School Report Card to be distributed to all parents November 1, 2001. The Education Accountability Act (EAA) requires the principal to write the narrative in conjunction with the School Improvement Council. The narrative is to be printed on the back page of the School Report Card.

The completed narrative for the upcoming School Report Card is to be sent in with the "summer data collection" required by the State Department of Education (SDE). Principals will receive directions from the SDE in early May and will have until mid-June to return the information including the narrative.

Be prepared and TUNE IN to the SIC State Meeting broadcast on May 3, 2001 (see p.5) to learn what is expected in the narrative. The live broadcast via ETV can be viewed at your local school and will provide an opportunity to ask questions about the narrative and the other data to be included on the report card. More detailed directions and advice about how to complete the narrative will appear in the May issue of the SICA News.

Sample State Report Card on EOC Website

Samples of the State Report Card to be released in November 2001 can found on the Education Oversight Committee website, www.state.sc.us/eoc. Elementary, middle and high school level samples are included along with rating criteria.

Also on the website is the Local Leadership Quality and Engagement Report. The EOC recently adopted a list of 14 recommendations, which will be sent to the General Assembly. To view this report and the report card samples relating to school board and public education reform, click on What's New.

Testing Schedule - 2001

March 26 – April 6: BSAP Exit Exam

March 27: Reading

March 28: Math

March 29: Writing

March 30: PACT Exit Field Tests

April 2-6: Make-up Testing

March 30: TerraNova

Samples of students in grades 4, 7, 10

April 30 – May 11: PACT, Grades 3-8

April 30: English/Language Arts (ELA), Day 1

May 1: ELA, Day 2

May 2: Math

May 3: Field test of ELA, Math, Science, and
Benchmark

May 4: Science, full-length field test

May 7-11: Make-up Testing

South Carolina is on the Right Path

By INEZ M. TENENBAUM
State Superintendent of Education

The news that South Carolina's focus on educational reform has been recognized nationally provides more evidence that our overall plan to improve public education has us on the right path. *Quality Counts 2001*, published by the respected national magazine *Education Week*, recently ranked our state's efforts to improve teacher quality and raise academic standards among the top six in the nation.

Quality Counts 2001 is the fifth annual report card on the state of school reform across the United States. Here are some of the report's highlights for South Carolina:

- Raising standards and accountability received a grade of B+. The state's rating of 87 – up three points from last year – ties it with North Carolina for the nation's fifth-highest score, up from the 15th best mark last year. Maryland had the highest score in this category this year with a 98.
- Teacher quality earned an 82, the fourth-best overall ranking and only six points below the highest score of 88 for North Carolina. South Carolina did not receive credit for new middle grade certification standards that will go into effect Oct. 1, 2008, which would likely have increased the B- mark. *Quality Counts* does not give credit for initiatives that are planned but not yet in effect.
- The state's score on school climate dropped two points from 1999 to a 62, or a D-. Only 19 states scored better than South Carolina on school climate, although that set of indicators was generally low for all states. School climate takes into account such things as school size; class size; parent involvement; and student absenteeism, tardiness and misbehavior.
- On education funding issues, South Carolina earned a B- for adequacy of funding, compared to last year's B mark. The report mentions some lawmakers' support for tax cuts, the passing of the referendum to allow counties to hold additional votes to

eliminate car taxes, and the one-penny decrease in taxes on groceries as detrimental to school budgets.

- The state's mark for equity dropped from a B- to a C. The report noted that a critical issue is the amount of money and other resources needed to help struggling schools improve and to help more accomplished schools meet the state's new academic standards.

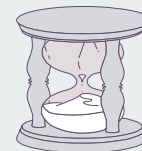
Other pieces of the state's Education Accountability Act not yet in effect – for example, school report cards, ratings and rewards – were also not considered in the state's marks. As these components are phased in, I expect to see our scores rise.

Quality Counts 2001 used a variety of resources for its report, including information from state departments of education, the U.S. Department of Education, the National Education Goals Panel, test results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the Education Commission of the States, the National Center for Education Statistics and the American Federation of Teachers. The complete *Quality Counts 2001* report, including South Carolina data, is available on line at (www.edweek.org).

Since taking office two years ago, we have focused on six key areas that serve as our blueprint for educational improvement. They include teacher quality, school leadership, early childhood education, accountability and standards for learning, safe and healthy schools, and parent and community involvement.

Although much work still lies ahead, our progress is undeniable. A sampling of recent accomplishments demonstrates that. Christa Compton, our State Teacher of the Year has been named a finalist in the National Teacher of the Year program; 331 additional teachers have earned the prestigious National Board Certification; high school seniors raised their SAT scores by an astounding 12 points, tying with Hawaii for the biggest improvement in the nation; students taking the ACT continued to improve; and first-graders maintained their record-breaking improvement on school readiness tests.

SIC ACTION TIMELINE



MARCH

- Continue collecting information about progress of each strategy being implemented during this year.
- Begin identifying information needed at the end of the year to evaluate the actions completed for each strategy.
- Plan how to assist getting testing schedule publicized to parents.

APRIL

- Continue to gather information about the progress of each strategy.
- Decide which strategy needs end-of-year evaluation and what method(s) will be used to gather the data.
- Coordinate with the administration and faculty to assist in the design of surveys to parents and/or the community to gather evaluation data.

MAY

- Watch live video broadcast May 3 about how to write the School Report Card Narrative (see page 5).
- Select a committee to work with the principal to write the narrative.
- Review draft of the narrative before submitting it with other data for the Report Card.
- Administer surveys, conduct interviews, and summarize data about strategy implementation progress.

Teachers, administrators, and school staff are working harder than ever; the governor and state legislature are providing leadership; businesses are increasingly supportive; parents are becoming involved in ever-greater numbers; and most important, students are improving their academic performance. Working together, I know we will continue to improve and ensure success for South Carolina's students and schools for many years to come.



Endnote speaker, Dominic Cappello, discusses his workshop session with Dr. Jean Norman.



Exhibitors were a welcome addition to the conference. Greg White (left) discusses programs from the American Lung Association with an SIC member.



Delphine Scott, principal of J.P. Thomas Elementary, Richland #1, presents a workshop on how the SIC can incorporate programs into their school improvement plan.



Governor Jim Hodges chats with conference presenter, Dee Albritton, SICA staff member, Jennifer Robinson, and SICA Board member, Mamie Templeton.



WIS-TV News reporter Rebecca Pepin conducts a live interview with SICA Executive Director, Dr. Jean Norman.



Registration went without a hitch thanks to SICA Administrative Coordinator, Weldon Horne (left) and volunteers.

**Thanks to the 15th Annual SIC Conference Partners
Communities in Schools - SC and Can We Talk? - SCPTA**

Mark Your Calendar!



SIC State Meeting Broadcast

May 3, 2001
via ETV Satellite
Channel 303
7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

May 11, 2001
Repeat Broadcast
ETV - Channel 322
11:00 a.m.

Agenda - School Report Card:

- Principal/SIC Narrative
- Summer Data Collection

*Dr. Sandra Lindsay,
Deputy Superintendent,
SC Department of Education*

Live Broadcast!

Only opportunity to get this information and ask questions! Call 800-733-9207 to participate!



The Next Step in Accountability: Parent Involvement

SICA has scheduled additional sessions of this popular workshop. School teams of three or more people (including the principal) are required. A light meal and materials are included in the registration fee of \$10 per person. Call SICA to obtain registration forms, 800-868-2232 or 803-777-7658.

March 20 , 2001

Tri-County Tech
Industrial & Business Development Center, Room 127
Pendleton, SC
3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
DEADLINE to register: Thursday, March 15.

March 29 , 2001

Golden Strip Career Center
Greenville, SC
3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
DEADLINE to register: Friday, March 23.

Spring 2001



South Carolina faces a \$500,000 shortfall in the state budget this year. There is strong bipartisan support for K-12 education in the face of serious budget cuts. Governor Hodges' proposed budget includes a 15% across the board cut for all state agencies with the exception of the Department of Education, which is to be "held harmless". In February the House Ways and Means Committee passed a budget that would cut state agencies from 47% to 10% except for a 2% increase for the Department of Education. Included in both the Governor's and the Ways and Means Committee budgets is a \$50,000 increase for School Improvement Council *Assistance*. The full House will now debate the Ways and Means Committee's proposal before sending a budget to the Senate for their consideration.

Two companion bills, H3606 and S358, would raise SC teachers' salaries to the national average within 5 years. There is bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate for raising teacher salaries. On February 20, Governor Hodges announced his proposal to raise teachers' salaries to \$1,000 above the Southeastern average. While there are some differences in the details of these two proposals, both would provide benefits to teachers.

H3029, a bill calling for equity in South Carolina's free public schools, sponsored by Representative Alex Harvin (D-Clarendon), began making its way through the House Education Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee in February. The State Supreme Court has ruled that the constitution requires only a "minimally adequate education." This bill would ensure that a high quality education would be available for all children in the state no matter which public school they attend.

To view bills or find contact information for all legislators, log on to www.scstatehouse.net.



Senator Warren Giese, Chair, Senate Education Committee, Representative Robert Walker, Chair, House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, with Richard Mock, SICA Board member at the 15th Annual SIC Conference

For Your Information. . .

City Year Accepting Applications for 2001-02 Corps

City Year, a member of the AmeriCorps network, is a national service program that unites diverse 17-24 year olds for a challenging year of full-time service, leadership development and civic engagement. They symbolize diversity and a solution to the most pressing issues of our community. A domestic counterpart to the Peace Corps and the inspiration behind AmeriCorps, City Year is founded upon the notion that young people are an untapped resource and help to provide a working solution to our country's most pressing needs.

City Year is now accepting applications for 2001-02 Corps. Benefits include: weekly stipend of \$140 including health insurance, educational award of \$4,725 for college expenses; opportunities to create programs for elementary, middle and high school students; focused leadership training; college and career counseling; opportunities to create and facilitate workshops on current events and issues; and complete Timberland uniform. For more information, call Stacy Jemmott at 803-254-3349 or e-mail sjemmott@cityyear.org or website www.cityyear.org.

Middle School News

"Re-engaging Parents in the Middle School" is a professional development video consisting of 12 half-hour segments conducted by Dr. Jean M. Norman, Executive Director of SICA. The video features four SC middle schools: Alice Drive MS (Sumter 17); Chester MS (Chester); Lakeview MS (Greenville); and Long Hr. HS (Chesterfield). Access the SCETV homepage (www.scetv.org) for broadcast times.

All MS math teachers attending the SC Middle School Association Conference (March 2-4, 2001) received Math TIPS for the Middle School consisting of 25 interactive homework assignments that students conduct with a family partner. Each TIPS assignment is matched to the SC math standards and engages families in what their child is learning in math. SICA sponsored the writing of the TIPS (Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork) and the SCMSA published the set.

Bring "Can We Talk?" to Your Community

"Can We Talk?" is a fun, interactive series of four workshops that helps parents enhance their role in their children's health and sexuality education. Trained facilitators are now available to conduct workshops in all areas of the state. All materials for parents are provided at no charge. If you would like to schedule one in your community, call Kelli Kenison, Project Coordinator, at 803/695-9955.

Spring 2001

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